

2/28/81

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ACTION ARA-16

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 INR-10 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-01
IO-14 NSCE-00 NSAE-00 SSO-00 HA-06 PM-09 PA-01
INRE-00 ICAE-00 SP-02 SPRS-02 /077 W
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O 282037Z FEB 81
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8614
INFO USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/TPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 1406

E.O. 12065: GDS 2-28-87 (FRIEDMAN, T.B.) OR-P
TAGS: SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: ARREST OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS

REF: STATE 052110

1. (U) ARGENTINE POLICE FEB 27 ARRESTED EMILIO MIGNONE, JOSE WESTERCAMP, BORIS PASIC, CARMEN LAPACO, MARCELO PARRILI REYNALDO SABONI LYDIA SALAZAR, AND GABRIELA IRIBARNE. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF IRIBARNE ALL ARE HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS OR EMPLOYEES WITH THE CENTER FOR LEGAL AND SOCIAL STUDIES (CELS). IRIBARNE IS YOUNG HOUSEGUEST OF WESTERCAMP AND WAS WITH HIM WHEN POLICE ENTERED CELS OFFICES ABOUT 7 PM. ACCORDING TO HUMAN RIGHTS SOURCES THE POLICE EXAMINED CELS FILES AND SEIZED DOCUMENTS. WHEN MIGNONE, ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT ARGENTINE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS, WAS ARRESTED AT HIS HOME THE POLICE REPORTEDLY SEARCHED THE APARTMENT AND ALSO TOOK PAPERS.

2. (U) WE ARE RELIABLY INFORMED THAT THE ARRESTS TOOK PLACE PURSUANT TO AND ORDER FROM A FEDERAL JUDGE. POLICE HAVE INFORMALLY ACKNOWLEDGED TO RELATIVES THAT THEY ARE HOLDING THE EIGHT. IN SHORT, THEY ARE NOT DISAPPEARED.

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3. [REDACTED] A MEMBER OF PRESIDENT VIELA' STAFF SPOKE TO FEDERAL JUDGE MARTIN ANZOATEGUI BY PHONE IN THE PRESENCE OF AN EMBASSY OFFICER.

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ANSOATEGUI REPORTEDLY STATED THAT HE HAD ORDERED "INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES" AGAINST CELS. THE JUDGE SAID THAT THE PROCEDURES WERE TO TAKE PLACE FEB 27 AND THAT THE ARRESTS EVIDENTLY FOLLOWED FROM LEGAL STEPS HE HAD ORDERED. HE SAID HE HAD NOT YET BEEN INFORMED OF THE ARRESTS (APPARENTLY NORMAL, ESPECIALLY ON A WEEKEN.

4. (U) IT IS WELL WITHIN THE AUTHORITY OF A FEDERAL JUDGE TO INITIATE AN INVESTIGATION-- AND ARRESTS. WE DO NOT KNOW IF THIS IS THE CASE HERE OR IF SOMEBODY POLICE (OR OTHER SECURITY FORCES) INSTIGATED ANZOATEGUI TO ACT. THE CHARGES AGAINST MIGNONE ET AL IS PART OF THE STILL SECRET COURT ORDER. LAWYERS FOR THE DETAINEES ARE NOW FILING HABEAS CORPUS PETITIONS IN THEIR BEHALF, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW WHEN THEY MIGHT BE RELEASED. AS OF 1600 LOCAL THEY WERE STILL BEING HELD INCOMMUNICADO, A STANDARD, AND LEGAL, ARGENTINE ARREST PROCEDURE AND ONE WHICH COULD LAST SEVERAL DAYS.

5. [REDACTED] EMBOFFS HAVE SPOKEN DURING COURSE OF DAY FEB 28 WITH OFFICIALS OF BOTH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND THE PRESIDENCY. MAKING IT CLEAR THAT WE UNDERSTOOD THEMATTER TO BE AN INTERNAL ARGENTINE AFFAIR, IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT THE ARRESTS WERE HAVING VERY STRONG IMPACT IN US MEDIA, CONGRESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS. THE REACTION COULD COMPLICATE EFFORTS OF OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS TO BETTER RELATIONS, WHICH WAS MANIFEST ON OUR PART BY THE SUCCESSFUL VISIT HERE THIS WEEK OF THE SECRETARY'S SPECIAL ENVOY, GENERAL WALTERS. IT ALSO WAS POINTED OUT TO FONMIN OFFICIAL THAT THE ARREST OF MIGNONE, WHO IS WELL KNOWN IN EUROPE, COULD HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE UNHRC CONSIDERATION IN GENEVA NEXT WEEK OF 1503 PROCEDURES.

6. [REDACTED] STAFF MEMBER OF FONMIN'S POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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JUST CALLED EMBASSY (5 PM) TO REPORT FONMIN OFFICIAL SHAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH ANZOATEGUI, WHO TOLD THEM PRECEEDINGS AGAINST DETAINEES WERE BASED ON THEIR SUPPOSED VIOLATION OF DECREE BANNING POLITICAL MEETINGS. STAFFER ALSO INDICATED FONMIN MOVING TO LIMIT POLITICAL DAMAGE FROM THE AFFAIR BUT COULD GIVE NO ASSURANCE ON EARLY RELEASE OF DETAINEES. HE HAD CALLED BACK EARLIER TO REPORT FOREIGN POLICY DIRECTORATE CHIEF, ENRIQUE ROS, HAD SPOKEN WITH INTERIOR MINISTRY OFFICE OF SECURITY COORDINATION ABOUT IMPLICATIONS IN CASE.
SHLAUDEMAN

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